

Economic Commission for Europe

Executive Body for the Convention on Long-range
Transboundary Air Pollution

Bureau of the Executive Body

Meeting

23 March 2020, via videoconference

Report of the meeting

I. Attendance

Bureau members: Ms. Anna Engleryd (Sweden, Chair), Mr. Richard Ballaman (Switzerland), Ms. Elizabeth Nichols (United States of America), Ms. Jennifer Kerr (Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review), Ms. Laurence Rouil (Chair of the EMEP Steering Body), Ms. Isaura Rabago (Chair of the Working Group on Effects) and Mr. Manfred Ritter (Chair of the Implementation Committee).

Observers: Ms. Susanne Lindahl (European Union).

Not present: Mr. Sergey Vasiliev (Russian Federation).

II. Preparations for the fifty-eighth session of the Working Group on Strategies and Review and alternatives to a face-to-face meeting

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, related uncertainties and restrictions, the Bureau discussed alternatives to holding a physical meeting of the Working Group on Strategies and Review in May. It decided that the fifty-eighth session of the Working Group had to be postponed and held back-to-back with the fortieth session of the Executive Body within the same week (14-18 December 2020), so that 3-3.5 days would be allocated to the Working Group's session, and 1-1.5 days – to the Executive Body. The programme of both meetings would be shortened and adapted accordingly. The Bureau requested the secretariat to inform Parties of the meeting postponement as soon as possible.

The Bureau further agreed that in its shortened agenda, the Working Group would give priority to the review of the Gothenburg Protocol. The Chair of the Working Group on Strategies and Review suggested that a drafting group was created to facilitate the review process.

The Bureau suggested that in order to ensure continued implementation of the Convention's 2020-2021 workplan, part of work of the Working Group could be taken online and held through email discussions. This could include, among others, the discussion of draft guidance documents, policy discussions on the hemispheric transport, and consideration of proposed amendments to the rules of procedure.

The comments and views provided by delegations could be posted on the webpage of the session, and a dedicated tab could be created for that by the secretariat. The Bureau noted that the involvement of countries from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia in the discussion on the review of the Gothenburg Protocol was crucial. It stressed the need to ensure their access to related information and to the communication channel.

III. Implementation of the 2020-2021 workplan for the implementation of the Convention and related follow-up to the thirty-ninth session of the Executive Body

The Bureau discussed the implementation of workplan's items 2.1.5 (Next steps on broader geographic cooperation on air pollution, including the role for the Convention and for the Forum for international cooperation on air pollution) and 5.2.1.2 (Outreach and cooperation activities through the Forum for international cooperation on air pollution), as well as the follow-up to Executive Body decision 2019/5 tasking the Bureau with further development of the proposal for the Forum, development of the Forum during the initial phase, including its terms of reference, identification of lead countries, etc.

The Bureau recognized the difficulty of placing the Forum outside the Convention and agreed that it should rather be a group under the Convention. It further agreed that the proposal for the Forum would need to be adapted accordingly. In this regard, the Bureau asked the secretariat to provide comments to earlier comments to the text of the proposal and to propose adaptation of the text to be consistent with the Convention.. The Bureau noted the information provided by the Chair about the first example of cooperation with WRI Mexico. It further noted that the information sharing within the Forum would not be limited to scientific and technical issues, but also include information sharing on policy processes. The Bureau will finalize the proposal together with countries willing to lead the Forum to give them the opportunity to comment and participate in the formulation on the respective decision. , and present it to the Executive Body.

IV. Communications and information flows within the Convention

The Bureau discussed potential ways for providing information to national focal points on activities of the task forces under the scientific subsidiary bodies of the Convention. The Bureau requested the secretariat to collect distribution lists from task force chairs and co-chairs and to forward them to national focal points on annual basis with an understanding that these lists might change in the meantime.

V. Secretariat support to Convention bodies

The secretariat provided information on its servicing of various bodies under the Convention explaining that there had been a model of lead countries chosen for meetings of expert groups and task forces in view of limited resources of the secretariat.

The secretariat noted that requests for servicing of other systematic and formal meetings could be considered taking into account the existing resources.

The Chair of the Working Group on Effects pointed to previous delays with issuing reports of joint EMEP SB/WGE sessions and asked the secretariat to provide these reports on time in the future.

VI. Other business

The Bureau member from the United States of America informed the Bureau that Canada and the United States of America had an informal exchange of seats in the Implementation Committee, and that Canada was going to nominate a member for the next term. The Bureau noted that although there was a need for a balanced geographical representation in the Committee, there was no specific rule preventing two Parties from North America to be elected as its members.

VII. Date, time and place for the next meeting

The Bureau agreed to keep the date of 25 May 2020 for a possible remote meeting.